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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2514  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 7098  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 4905  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001958

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2016

TAGS: PREL PTER PHUM PREF MOPS CE

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: MONITORING MISSION BACKS UN CLAIMS THAT ELEMENTS OF SECURITY FORCES ARE WORKING WITH KARUNA PARAMILITARY

REF: A. COLOMBO 1911

1B. COLOMBO 1896

1C. COLOMBO 1895

Classified By: Charge' d'Affaires James R. Moore for reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) Summary: On November 13, following a ten-day trip to Sri Lanka, United Nations Special Advisor for Children and Armed Conflict Allan Rock released a report alleging complicity between elements of the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) security forces and the Karuna faction (ref C). The Nordic-led Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission quickly backed Rock's statement, while the Sri Lanka Army vehemently denied any knowledge of or assistance in Karuna group abductions. An expatriate USAID representative in the east of Sri Lanka reported that police and Karuna forces worked together on November 14-15 to warn Tamils in Batticaloa and Trincomalee not to participate in an LTTE-led strike following the murder of Tamil Member of Parliament Nadarajah Raviraj. End summary.

Army "Perturbed"

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12. (C) On November 13, United Nations Special Advisor for Children and Armed Conflict Allan Rock released a report following a ten-day trip to Sri Lanka alleging complicity between elements of the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) security forces and the Karuna faction (ref C). The Sri Lanka Army (SLA) responded immediately with a press release November 13 saying they were "perturbed" by Rock's statement, which they called "completely misleading." The SLA questioned the impartiality of the UN, stating, "It is no secret that the UN by innuendo has gone the extra mile to

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blame the troops of the Sri Lankan security forces who are deployed in government controlled areas of eastern Batticaloa to contain LTTE violence and defend human rights... Security forces deny any involvement with the LTTE breakaway group for abductions in Batticaloa." Government-owned and -influenced media then launched a smear campaign against Rock the week of November 20.

SLMM Backs Findings

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¶3. (U) Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission spokesperson Helen Olafsdottir told Reuters that the SLMM had been aware of collusion between elements of the security forces and the Karuna group for some time (ref A), and noted the relationship in a September 2006 report available to the public.

Karunas and Local Police Intimidate Shop Owners

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¶4. (C) Following the November 10 murder of Tamil National Alliance Member (TNA) of Parliament Nadarajah Raviraj in Colombo (ref B), the pro-LTTE TNA called a general strike in the eastern districts of Batticaloa and Trincomalee on November 14-15. A U.S. contractor in Trincomalee reported that police and the Karuna group were cooperating in the intimidation of Tamil civilians. She told us that police with one or two armed Karuna cadres were visiting shopkeepers who had closed their shops in observance of the strike, ordering them to reopen. Civilians were caught in the squeeze, unsure of which potentially violent forces -- LTTE or SLA/Karuna -- to obey.

Human Rights Activists Concur

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¶5. (C) Human rights activist and director of the Berghof Foundation Dr. Mario Gomez told us that ongoing forced recruitment by the Karuna faction since the March 2004 split with the LTTE has increased recently. He added, "To some extent, these abductions are being facilitated by the security forces." Muslim Peace Secretariat chairman A.M.M. Faaiz contended to POL FSN that Karuna could not operate without "a lot of patronage." Commenting on the Allan Rock report, National Peace Council director Jehan Perera told us:

COLOMBO 00001958 002 OF 002

"The international community has now put the GSL virtually on par with the LTTE in terms of human rights abuses and impunity. The GSL cannot stomach this comparison."

¶6. (C) Comment: The SLMM has concluded in earlier reports that the Karuna group operates with at least some support from elements of the GSL security forces, but the Sinhalese general public has discounted this, perceiving the Nordic monitors as biased toward the LTTE. The UN has now put its prestige behind the allegations. It is unfortunate that the government has elected to circle the wagons and respond with both personal attacks against Rock and allegations of sinister UN motives, rather than attempt to address the real human rights problems that exist.

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